

Summary of Arkansas' Elementary and Secondary Education Act Flexibility Program

How does Arkansas measure the performance of schools and districts?

Under ESEA Flexibility schools are held accountable for reducing by half the proficiency gap or growth gap and the graduation rate gap (for high schools) within six years for both the All Students group and the Targeted Achievement Gap Group (TAGG). The TAGG is a group of students considered educationally at-risk for one or more of the following: economically disadvantaged, English Learners, and/or Students With Disabilities. Each year, every school is rated as follows: Exemplary, Achieving, Needs Improvement, Needs Improvement Focus or Needs Improvement Priority.

These ratings are based on the following:

1. **Performance or Growth.** Schools must meet their individualized math and literacy Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO) for the All Students and TAGG group or meet the established growth AMOs for the same groups. Growth is defined as making enough progress from an initial test to indicate students are on course to be proficient by eighth grade.
2. **Graduation Rate.** High schools must meet a graduation rate AMO for the All Students and TAGG groups.

School's individualized progress AMOs are based on prior performance (similar to growth or progress targets for students). Schools must meet all established AMOs to be designated as Exemplary or Achieving. To be classified as Exemplary, a school must demonstrate high performance, high progress, high TAGG performance or high TAGG progress and must meet their AMOs for all ESEA subgroups. All other schools are classified in one of the Needs Improvement categories based on the nature and degree of underperformance.

What targets has Arkansas set for its schools and districts?

In determining whether a school meets the proficiency gap AMO described above, the state uses prior year performance or a weighted three-year performance average. Individualized AMOs set incremental progress expectations based on a school-specific 2011 starting point. In determining the growth gap, the state's current growth measure, a growth-to-standard model for grades 3-8 based on vertical moderation is used. A new growth measure based on next generation assessments is planned.

What is Arkansas doing to support its lowest performing schools?

Arkansas implemented a comprehensive system of differentiated support and intervention that is informed by lessons learned from the state's No Child Left Behind differentiated accountability pilot. Both Needs Improvement Priority and Needs Improvement Focus schools are required to engage in a diagnostic analysis of their systems that support student instruction and family/community engagement. The district and school are each required to identify a leadership team to support systemic change and continuous improvement.

Needs Improvement Priority Schools have persistent, systemic improvement needs that trigger system-level intervention. These schools are assigned a School Improvement Specialist to help implement interventions and resource allocations and provide ongoing monitoring. A Priority Intervention Plan, developed with the district, must address all seven turnaround principles and put an emphasis on teacher and leader effectiveness. If a priority school does not make sufficient progress toward meeting the interim measurable objectives outlined in the priority intervention plan, the district may be placed in Academic Distress, leading to significant ADE intervention.

Needs Improvement Focus Schools must have comprehensive plans with targeted interventions and interim measurable objectives approved by the ADE each year, with ongoing monitoring by a site-based improvement specialist or external provider. External monitoring is required if the school does not make sufficient progress after one year. If the lack of progress persists, the school may be required to implement any or all of the turnaround principles.

What is Arkansas doing to support schools and districts?

Arkansas differentiates recognition and consequences based on the degree of excellence or needs revealed through academic performance, growth and graduation rates. The Statewide System of Support focuses resources where they are needed most. For each of the five performance ratings, the state has outlined the anticipated levels of state engagement and district autonomy, and the frequency with which the school and district review and revise their comprehensive improvement plan.

- Achieving schools that meet performance and growth AMOs for math and literacy participate in a three-year continuous improvement planning cycle with low state engagement and high district autonomy.
- Achieving schools that meet the performance targets but not growth targets are required to have an annual improvement planning cycle with heavy emphasis on data-driven analysis and with strategies, human resources and funding to address the needs of any subgroup that does not meet one or more AMOs.

- Needs Improvement Schools are required to undertake a deep analysis of each area of underperformance, identify evidence-based practices or interventions to serve students in any subgroup that did not meet its AMOs, and have an improvement plan that focuses on the alignment of needs, interventions, and human and financial resources. These schools receive support from education cooperative staff with moderate district autonomy.

In developing an improvement plan, schools must use multiple data sources, engage in a deep analysis of weaknesses, and then draw from evidence-based practices in developing specific strategies for improvement.

What is Arkansas doing to maintain focus on subgroups and target support to subgroups?

Arkansas continues to measure and report on the performance of all of the ESEA subgroups in addition to the performance of the TAGG group. By utilizing the TAGG group, the state increased rates of inclusion of students within the African American, Hispanic, EL and SWD student groups in school accountability determinations. Each subgroup has individualized AMOs. Schools are required to plan and implement interventions for any group or subgroup that does not meet its annual target regardless of the school's overall status.

What is Arkansas doing for its top performing schools?

Arkansas awards its top performing schools, those with high performance or high progress, the designation of Exemplary Schools and recognition for their accomplishments. These schools are called on to help the ADE in its capacity building efforts by collaborating with other schools throughout the state. Exemplary Schools are put on a three-year continuous improvement planning cycle and are exempt from state approval of the plan.

How does Arkansas report information to the public?

Under state law, districts are required to publish annual School Performance Reports. These reports also are published by ADE along with District and State Performance Reports. In addition, Arkansas has an enhanced reporting system that highlights performance on critical indicators on the pathway to college and career-readiness. This includes a report of annual accountability designations, school progress in meeting AMOs (for the All Students, TAGG and ESEA subgroups), and a number of college and career indicators. Color-coding on the report highlights performance and supports continuous improvement planning.